

Skills & Economic Regeneration Partnership Minutes of the Meeting
National Metal Forming Centre, West Bromwich
Wednesday 19th August 2009

Present:	Frank Mills	-	Chair
	Keith Stanley	-	Chamber of Commerce
	Kay Greenbank	-	Business Link WM
	Alan Wood	-	Business Link WM
	Annette Sandy	-	Black Country Consortium
	Paul Bradley	-	GOWM
	Chaz Johal	-	SMBC
	Lyndon Bracewell	-	SMBC
	John Tew	-	Chamber of Commerce
	John Sutton	-	SMBC
	Phil Coughlan	-	SMBC
	Gary Egginton	-	Jobcentre Plus
	Cllr Shackleton	-	SMBC
	Jim Wells	-	SMBC
	Steve Smith	-	SMBC
	Andy Bywater	-	SMBC
	Mel Chillingworth	-	SMBC
	Val Bailey	-	Sandwell College
	Kim Mocroft	-	SMBC
	Eileen Kibbler	-	Sandwell PCT

Apologies: Ian Cotterill
Bill Fryer
Joe Ling
Stephen Gabriel
Shirley Woolner

The meeting started at 9.30am

3. Matters Arising

Minutes agreed as an accurate record – amendments to previous minutes John Tew requested that Minute No 10 - bullet point 13 on page 6 be amended to better reflect the views he had expressed at the previous meeting. This minute will therefore be re-worded and a revised set of minutes circulated to SERP members.

- College new build should be starting in September.

- AWM review programme of activity – 2/3 key projects are for regeneration of West Bromwich.
- Homea and Communities Agency rep to attend SERP – no action as yet still in discussions.
- Economic situation – there will be an event to look at Sandwell's future vision in the autumn.
- Need greater collaboration between the 3 sub groups.
- Employment & Skills MAA City region – now approved by the Government. Kim to circulate information re: role and membership of new City Region Commissioning Group.
- Item 12, Shirley Woolner – deferred to a future meeting
- Future Jobs Fund – bid for borough now approved with 364 jobs across the Council, PCT, Fire Service and Voluntary Sector. The jobs are for 18-24 year olds unemployed for approximately 12 months.

4. Forward Plan

This item is for information, if colleagues want items added to the forward plan please contact John Sutton.

5. Quarter 1 2009/10:

5a Appendix 1 – overall employment rate is falling and gap between SMBC and Britain is getting bigger.

Mel C to circulate update to the group on benefits for the unemployed which have been delayed.

Figures at JCP changing all the time. Sandwell has been effected more during the recession.

Mel C to circulate July claimant figures to the group. Qualifications data show that there has been a 1% increase in 2008 for NVQ 3 and above qualifications.

5b SERP Business Plan – there are 94 actions in the document with 8 actions marked red. Sub groups manage these actions with sub group chairs to ensure that milestones and targets are being met.

Young people are an issue with another 400,000 young people nationally leaving school and university in the summer.

Are the targets we have appropriate for the current economic climate? These will be reviewed as part of an annual update and the preparation of the new Economic Plan.

6. Development Issues

6a Economic Downturn Action Plan – noted that the Business Group has decided to form a smaller group to discuss the downturn.

Need to concentrate on the unemployed going into self employment. Need to target children in school on self employment business.

Andy Bywater explained the Action Plan 2009/10 on the response to the downturn.

Need to integrate anti poverty work and the WE Sandwell campaign into the Action Plan.

Need to develop the NESPs wider into specific wards that are not covered.

6b Sectoral Development in Sandwell – Need to make sure we are providing the place for businesses to grow in the borough of Sandwell, and to attract inward investment.

The vision for the borough – (what will we see in 10 years time?)

CAA has to have a view on what Sandwell is about. Partners have different views on different sectors and we should be looking at which stand the most chance of taking us out of the recession - papers to be emailed to the group at the end of the month.

Food manufacturing is doing quite well in the recession for example, East End Foods, Allied Bakery. This sector hits all the buttons as the recession is not really affecting this market.

Consultations with AWM identified a number of site characteristics such as good drainage, good access to water supplies, access to gas and electricity and factories which are not next to housing estates to help guide the creation of the right environment for business growth.

Employment land needs to be prepared and needs to be ready now for employers to move on to sites.

Need premises and skills available for companies. Support mechanisms are available for businesses.

There are a lot of companies already in the borough that may need to move for example to expand their businesses. The Council needs to be in a position to offer them a site and not to lose them to another borough.

Need to have a clear marketing offer, quality of opportunities and sustainability.

Kay Greenbank from Business Link gave a presentation on the work Business Link is doing to respond to the recession.

Need to change the title to Economic Upturn and not the Economic Downturn, need to be more positive for the future.

Skills and Business support initiative is now offered by Business Link to businesses and starter businesses in the west Midlands.

New services from Business Link include ICT, Innovation, Environment Efficiency, Procurement, Transformational Business, Recovery Service, and Access to Finance.

Other initiatives are Credit Crunch hotlines, Surveys, Events, and Business Doctor.

There is also Start Up Support with a requirement to improve focus on diversity, women, BME, young people, 50 plus and disabled.

The potential sectors to focus on in Sandwell were agreed as:-

- Advanced engineering;
- Construction and off site manufacturing;
- Food;
- Business and Professional Services;
- Creative Industries;
- Health and Care;
- Green technologies;
- Transport and Distribution;
- Retail.

Further work and consultation would now be undertaken and reported to the November SERP meeting.

7. Forward Together

This event is a staff conference for Sandwell MBC employees. This year there will be six thematic strands on the gallery floor.

Need representatives from SERP to attend the stands. Contact John Sutton or Phil Coughlan if any colleagues have any information for the event or are able to attend.

8. Financial Inclusion

Agreed the need to provide support on the financial inclusion agenda.

Council offered this initiative to staff to give advice on financial affairs and to tackle poverty issues.

9. Minutes of the Sub Groups

For information - noted.

10. Future Jobs Fund

A brief update on progress was provided.

11. Worklessness Review

Final report will be circulated to the group in due course.

12. Any Other Business

John circulated papers to the group to focus on service delivery – 3 main Priorities of the Council.

Need to re-think SMBC Priorities and incorporate them. Need to fit new priorities into employment worklessness, skills and business support.

Need feedback by the 9th September 2009.

Event to roll out further Business Implementation Session for Sandwell companies – week commencing 5th October from Business Link.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 18th November 2009 at 9.30 a.m. at the National Metalforming Centre.